



Gordon Lauder, MD of frozen food distributor Central Foods, highlights how frozen food could prove a lifeline for venues as they open up for business.

Pubs, bars, cafés, restaurants, hotels and other hospitality outlets are facing a new landscape as we emerge from lockdown and move forward.

With changes being implemented both front of house and behind the scenes, operators will be working in new and different ways to accommodate safety measures to guard against the spread of Covid-19.

Using quality, pre-prepared frozen products in the kitchen could help many venues to maintain a food offering with minimal resource.

“It’s very much the norm to use some frozen pre-prepared products in all professional kitchens now,” explains Gordon.

“Caterers recognise the benefits of frozen food. It’s easy to use, fewer staff are needed for preparation and serving, it can help with cost control and reduces waste.

“There’s a huge range of premium quality products to choose from and now, as we move into a new way of working, it may be the ideal time to explore and discover just what’s out there and how beneficial frozen food can be in any catering operation.”

Central Foods, which is one of the UK’s leading frozen food distributors, is highlighting five reasons why using frozen pre-prepared items could be the key to opening up professional catering operations after lockdown.

- **Supports social distancing.** Some operators will need to reduce the number of kitchen staff per shift to allow safe social distancing. With fewer staff and potentially less expertise in the kitchen, good quality pre-prepared products could be a bonus.
- **Speeds up service.** Pre-prepared products are quicker to serve, allowing a more efficient turnover of tables and potentially increasing the number of covers serviced.
- **Keeps a firm grip on costs.** Operators will be understandably keen to tightly manage costs when first opening and frozen pre-prepared options are ideal, as portions can be precisely controlled.

- **Reinforces trust with accreditation.** Use suppliers with recognised health and safety and hygiene accreditation for reassurance and peace of mind, for both yourself and your customers. A recent survey by The NPD Group revealed that a significant proportion of consumers were planning to return to hospitality outlets, but that trust was an important issue. The insights firm found that almost two thirds of people (64%) said they would only choose places that they trust. Anything that you can do to reassure customers about the quality and origins of the food you serve will help encourage them back into your venue.
- **Caters for demand.** It may be difficult to predict customer numbers as we move forward into a ‘new normal’ and this could be a challenge for operators. Having frozen food in stock will ensure that you can always cater for demand and you don’t waste food and ingredients unnecessarily. Make sure you have a range of frozen free-from items to keep customers with dietary requirements happy and to avoid being caught out by unexpected requests.

“Frozen food products can play a really important role as we learn to negotiate a new landscape in the hospitality sector,” adds Gordon. “For some outlets, using frozen food could mean the difference between maintaining a food offering and being forced to suspend it, so I would urge operators to take a look at the superb range of frozen pre-prepared items that are available for the foodservice sector.”

Northamptonshire-based Central Foods has been supplying frozen food to the foodservice sector for nearly 25 years. It currently supplies more than 220 independent wholesalers, as well as larger national and regional wholesalers, and foodservice caterers across the entire foodservice industry.

Offering a one-stop shop to the foodservice sector, Central Foods sources products from around the world and the UK, supplying more than 400 different lines, ranging from meat, bakery items and canapés through to buffet products, desserts and puddings.